

I. F. Stone's Weekly

VOL. III, No. 39

OCTOBER 24, 1955



WASHINGTON, D. C.

15 CENTS

Will Labor Let the Clock Turn Back to Pre-Wagner Act Tactics?

Strike-Breaking By Martial Law

New Castle, Indiana

New Castle, in central Indiana, near the Ohio border, is on a branch line of the Pennsylvania railroad between Chicago and Cincinnati. Three trains a day going each way make the stop. When I dropped off late Saturday afternoon and walked through the high grass to the narrow station platform, the only visible signs of martial law were two National Guardsmen, one with adolescent acne. Their steel helmets and their jeep were marked in white, "Military Police," and they had the sheepish look which Americans, an ineradicably civilian people, seem to acquire in uniform. When I asked one of them if New Castle had a hotel, he seemed as much of a stranger as I.

The lone taxi driver was lugubrious. The taverns had been closed down by a military order prohibiting all sale of alcoholic beverages. In addition, as a result of some trouble with teen agers the night before, a curfew had just been issued, ordering residents under 18 off the streets at 10:30 p.m. and all others before midnight. New Castle, ordinarily a lively place on Saturday, was in for a dull night. The neon lights were going on but there were few people on the streets as we drove up to the local hotel, the Plaza, a comfortable faded establishment of Grover Cleveland era vintage. The elderly gentleman who served as room clerk, switchboard operator and bellboy was still exhilarated by the after effects of the strike shootings at the Perfect Circle Foundry the week before. This—by actual count—had brought 42 reporters and camera men to a town founded in 1822 but hitherto overlooked by history.

Like Occupied Territory

Outside, the scene might have been that in any one of a thousand small Midwestern towns. The county courthouse, with its monstrously gloomy tower and the standard soldier monument on the lawn, was an architect's nightmare. Most of the stores were closed and there was little traffic. A National Guardsman smoking a pipe went by with a girl, and an occasional jeep passed on patrol. The last time I covered a town under martial law was Jerusalem in 1947, and I headed down Main Street toward the city hall for a curfew pass. There was a jeep out front, and a 20-year-old six-foot Guardsman from Indianapolis on duty outside. The police sergeant referred me to the "Provost Marshal" on the second floor.

There the military had taken over, with maps, pins and charts. The maps showed the martial law area of Henry and Wayne counties; the pins, the road blocks; the charts, the public meetings and demonstrations for which permits had been issued. The Cub Scouts were meeting Tuesday at 1400 hours in the Holland House, the Audubon Society on Thursday at 2030 hours and the Baptist Church had obtained permission for a hay ride on Saturday night, with 20 couples expected.

The youthful blond Major Wilson in charge never seemed to have heard of curfew passes for the press but was otherwise in his element. It turned out that he had been an American Occupation officer in Linz, Austria, after the war and this was just another assignment in handling occupied territory. "You have to work through the existing authorities," he explained about the police operating as usual downstairs. In the civilian years between Occupied Linz and Occupied New Castle, the Major had settled down as a hardware salesman.

Four blocks away on North Main Street at the headquarters of the United Automobile Workers there was less affability. The union hall is a new solid brick one story-and-base-ment building set high above the street with small windows like a fortress. On the doors at the top of a flight of stairs were two notices, the new curfew order, signed by Howard S. Wilcox, Colonel, Indiana National Guard, and a union notice declaring that for the duration of the emergency all persons entering the building must identify themselves. Just inside the door in the darkened hall were four union men sitting on guard. They were willing to identify themselves as strikers from the Perfect Circle plant but beyond that sat in glum and awkward silence, unwilling to answer questions. "All the stories about us have been one-sided," one of them complained. Only Carl Batsfield, president of the local, could give out any information. Where was he? Out of town. When was he expected back? Maybe tonight, maybe tomorrow.

Plant Approaches Guarded

A *Christian Science Monitor* reporter came along but had no better luck in trying to break the ice. We decided to drive off in his car to the scene of the shootings which brought martial law. We drove up 25th street to Plum and were turning down toward the Perfect Circle Foundry plant when we were stopped by two guardsmen on the corner. One had an M-1 gun slung over his shoulder, the other a walkie-talkie. No one, we were told, was allowed to approach the plant without special permission. A sergeant drove up in a jeep, inspected the glove compartment and trunk of the car, looked at our credentials and finally let us go through. Outside the darkened plant a handful of guardsmen sentries with wool scarves pulled over their helmets in the cold night air walked up and down in their badly fitting uniforms, looking like Bill Mauldin characters.

A few houses down the street the wife of one of the strikers gave us her version of the shooting and showed us a bullet hole in the wall of one room, just above the children's beds. The one story clapboard four room house was bare and poverty stricken. She and her husband had four children at home with them and were originally, like many of the workers here, from Kentucky. She insisted in her broad Southern accent that the

Atavistic Incident or A New Pattern for Labor Relations?

shooting had begun from within the struck plant but admitted "when they started shootin' our men decided to go home and get their shootin' arns, too."

II

This industrial town of 18,000 is the scene of an odd strike. The intransigence of the employers and the militancy of the workers are like something out of the pages of the pre-Wagner Act past. So is the use of the labor injunction, the police, the National Guard and then martial law in a classic attempt at strike-breaking. In this sense, the Perfect Circle strike is more than a freak, an atavistic incident in labor relations. If the strike is broken, Perfect Circle may become a foretaste of the future instead of an unexpected page from the past. If for the first time in many years employers again succeed in breaking a strike by martial law, they may be encouraged—especially if business slackens off—to try the same formula elsewhere. This is why New Castle deserves national attention, and the Perfect Circle strikers the support of the entire labor movement.

Small Town Barons

The story really begins some 15 miles east of here in Hagerstown, not much more than an overgrown village, with some 1800 population. This, too, is under martial law. Whether one drives in from New Castle to the west or from Richmond some 15 miles east, the traveller stopping while National Guardsmen search his car for arms and liquor, catches a glimpse of baronial mansions unexpected in a small midwestern town. These are the homes of the Teetors, who dominate Hagerstown and own Perfect Circle, its only industry. An earlier generation of Teetors had a bicycle shop in Hagerstown, switched to making the old fashioned hand operated railroad flatcars, and then, with the rise of the automobile, to piston rings, their present specialty. They produce a fourth of the rings used in the automobile industry. There were four or five Teetor brothers, and their children run the company.

From the road block on the west side of the town, set high on a wide lawn curving upward is the mansion of Ralph Teetor, blind since five, who began as chief engineer with the company in 1919 and has been its president since 1946. He is a Republican, a 32d degree Mason and a trustee of Earlham, the famous Quaker college in nearby Richmond. From the road block at the other end of town one can catch a glimpse through the trees of three other Teetor mansions, those of Harry, Donald and Lothair.

Shot Out of Office

Cousin Ralph is the engineering genius, Lothair the head of the family company. Lothair was born in Hagerstown. He served in the Navy in the first World War, began as a clerk with the family concern in 1920, became president in 1938 and chairman of the board in 1946. He was elected president of the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce in 1940, a director of the National Association of Manufacturers (1942-49), and served two terms in the State Legislature (1945-47 and 1949-51). He lists himself as a Republican, a Christian Scientist and a Mason. In October, 1953, he became Assistant Secretary of Commerce in Washington, distinguishing himself there as in Indianapolis by his craggy rightist anti-union views. The day after the shooting in New Castle, Secretary of Commerce

Reverse Play on the Usual Charge

"One of the principal difficulties in the relations between the Perfect Circle Company and its employees is the acceptance by the management of the company of the theory of the class struggle. UAW-CIO representatives who have participated in negotiations with this management can testify that their dedication to the theory of class warfare is just as strong as that of the Communist Party—and the incident today at New Castle is an evidence of that fact."

—From telegram of protest sent by Walter Reuther of the UAW after the Perfect Circle shootings to Secretary of Labor Mitchell and Governor Craig of Indiana.

Weeks denied that Teetor was being "dropped," but admitted he was resigning. Weeks said this was in pursuance of a decision made in April. The shots made Teetor a political liability.

The original Teetor plant in Hagerstown, with about 650 production workers, machines the piston rings cast at the New Castle foundry, which employs about 250 production workers. In Richmond the company has two new plants, a foundry employing about 70 workers and a machining plant employing about 250. All are on strike. Their labor relations from the beginning have been a story of bitter struggle. The Teetors have tried to break the UAW-CIO not only by "independent" unionism but by playing A. F. of L. against CIO without success. There have been several strikes and de-certification elections. To the handful of workers and their families having breakfast in the sunny union hall at Hagerstown Sunday morning, the current strike is only a new chapter in a long effort to break their union. The military jeeps parked in front of the fire house just behind the union hall are only other evidence of Teetor political power. Martial law covers all of Henry County, Hagerstown in adjoining Wayne County, and a two mile radius around the Teetor plants in the larger city of Richmond, where the scene around the Teetor plants is bright with khaki. This is how "labor relations" were conducted a generation ago.

Anti Union Mayor

Hagerstown is at the mercy of the Teetors. Richmond with its small plants has never been too strong a union town. New Castle is the labor citadel in this struggle and one of the issues is the insistence of the UAW that the Teetors negotiate a company-wide contract. The UAW wants a union shop while the Teetors have long been pressing at Indianapolis for a "right to work" law. The UAW also wants to close the 40 to 60 cents an hour wage differential between Perfect Circle and the other plants in New Castle. "A sweeper at Chrysler," one New Castle worker said, "gets as much as a skilled machine operator at Perfect Circle."

Chrysler, with its 4,000 employees (all but 50 of them non-union before the present union shop was won), is New Castle's biggest industry. This town of 18,000 has almost 6,000 unionized workers, half of whom live inside the city of New Castle. They can be but are not always a political power. Under the Democratic Mayor labor failed to support for reelection four years ago, the police did not interfere with picketing when Perfect Circle was shut down in 1949 nor in 1950 when Chrysler was shut down for 104 days and only

Why and How Those Shootings Occurred on October 5

maintenance workers were allowed through the picket line. It is the present Mayor, Paul McCormack, an insurance man by profession, the Republican incumbent, whom labor blames for the attempt to break the Perfect Circle strike by violence, and McCormack comes up for reelection November 7.

III

Indiana is a Republican State but many of its industrial towns have Democratic pro-labor Mayors. In recent years, during strikes at Terre Haute and Connersville, when "scabs" were brought in, the Mayors had them shipped out of town under police escort. The Perfect Circle strike has been marked by planned strike-breaking almost from the beginning. It began on July 25 and for several weeks the plant at New Castle was shut down. Then strike-breakers were recruited and about three weeks later, when they tried to get through the picket line with police help, there was trouble. This gave the company its opportunity to obtain an injunction on the ground that the picketing was not peaceful. It may be significant that the Teetors had to go outside Henry County to get that injunction. Circuit Judge W. Ratliff of this county showed his mettle when he refused to hold court at all under martial law. The injunction limited the number of pickets to five, but as the strike dragged on the number of pickets began to increase and ill feeling grew as the police took strikebreakers in and out of the plant.

On September 27 there was a line of about 100 men around the plant when several panel trucks and a milk truck drove up. Out came the entire police force of New Castle, and not only broke up the picket line but for good measure beat up workers watching from their lawns on Plum street. In reserve at Baker Park, in case the situation got beyond the local police, was a contingent of state police. They did not have to be called. Fifty strikers were arrested that day by the local police, and the next week 35 strikers, including Carl Batsfield, president of the Perfect Circle local, received form notices advising them of their discharge for improper conduct on company premises. This set off the demonstration of October 5.

Met With Gunfire

On the morning of October 5 several thousand demonstrators from other plants and surrounding communities converged on the plant. Police posted at the entrances of Plum and Walnut streets did not risk an attempt to stop them. That day there were no state police in reserve. They poured down the two streets singing "solidarity forever" and as they approached the plant they were met with gunfire from within it. At least four demonstrators were hit and the strikers were enraged when word spread shortly after that Bob Ford, a Chrysler worker, had died of his wounds. This false report was even carried in a news broadcast and soon swelled the size of the demonstration. A majority of the workers here are from Kentucky and Tennessee, accustomed to firearms. They went home—as the lady said—for their "shootin' arns" and many did not live more than a few doors away.

The rest has been well covered. It took an appeal from the State Police and then from the Lieutenant Governor to win a two hour truce from the workers in which to disarm and evacuate the strike-breakers and shut down the plant. An attempt was made to mediate but the company held out against

An Anti-Union Crusade

"The people who have made the operation of the foundry possible have, of course, helped the company take care of their customer commitments and helped insure jobs for the future, but in addition to that they are making a personal contribution to the crusade which will undoubtedly eventually result in the passage of laws establishing the right of an individual to work where he pleases without paying tribute to anyone."

—Letter of encouragement for strike-breakers posted October 12 on the bulletin board of the strike-bound Perfect Circle foundry in New Castle, Ind., from William B. Prosser, vice president and general manager of the company.

a union shop "as a matter of principle." It was the Mayor who went over the Lieutenant Governor's head to Governor George N. Craig and on October 10 martial law was imposed. Under cover of National Guard guns the plants were reopened with strikebreakers.

The scene here in New Castle was peaceful on Sunday morning. Plum street with its one story frame houses on wide-spaced green lawns, was bright with flowers. At the end of the street across from the plant were the five folding chairs under a clump of trees with an old iron stove in the center, waiting for the five permitted pickets to return on Monday morning. On the left was a high yellow water tower with "Perfect Circle" on it in black letters and over toward the right behind the wire fence were three big ugly Sherman tanks and two half tracks. The young Lieutenant in charge was polite but would answer no questions. "How many of your men are union members?" I asked him. He blushed, "I can't answer that one, either."

Not Like The Old Days

The Teetor family would turn back the clock. The International UAW representative who met me at the union hall after church on Sunday with his new tweed coat, neatly clipped mustache and tan kid gloves might have stepped off Madison Avenue, but he has seniority as a machine operator in the Chrysler plant here which goes back to 1936 when Teetors were the rule and not the exception. "I don't think our members are going to install bloody piston rings," William F. Caldwell, the UAW representative, summed it up for me. Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and International Harvester all use Perfect Circle rings, and all are UAW strongholds.

Twenty years ago the Teetors might have starved their workers out. Today a family with five children are allowed \$30 a week by the union for groceries and their utility bills are paid for them. Archie H. Hill, the union's Negro sergeant-at-arms, recalled that in 1934 when he first joined up at Chrysler he was drawing only \$32 in pay every two weeks. The violent effort at union-busting has suddenly recalled the old days vividly to trade unionists grown sedate and respectable; there is an upsurge of the old militancy here. Times have changed, and labor will fight to keep them changed.

On a bronze plaque in the building, signed by the executive board, Hill's name among them, is a memorial commemorating the 104-day Chrysler strike in 1950. "With our hands," it says, "we build automobiles. With our hearts we build a better tomorrow." This is the tomorrow at stake in the strike at Perfect Circle.

The Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Its First Smith Act Appeal Since Dennis

Barrows Dunham Acquitted—A Challenge to Philadelphia's Conscience

The acquittal of Professor Barrows Dunham in Federal court here last week was a defeat for the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Department of Justice. The Fifth amendment was never more sweepingly invoked than by Professor Dunham. When called before the committee two years ago, he refused to do more than give his name, and the place and time of his birth. When he declined to answer questions as to his educational background and occupation, he was held in contempt. The government argued that the answers to these questions were known and could not have been incriminating. But Judge Joseph C. McGarraghy ruled that the nature of the investigation and its setting justified Professor Dunham.

In deciding that Professor Dunham had properly invoked the privilege, Judge McGarraghy in effect overruled the trustees of Temple University in Philadelphia. When they dismissed Professor Dunham, they did so on the ground that he had "misused" the privilege. It would have been more seemly to wait until that question had been decided by the courts. But what happens now that the trustees have been declared in error?

This is a challenge to the academic profession and to the people of the Philadelphia area. A full professor, head of his department, a philosopher of distinction, author of several well-known works, was dismissed from his post, despite tenure, on legal grounds which have failed to be sustained in court. Since the trustees misread the law, justice calls for Professor Dunham's reinstatement. We urge the formation of a committee in Philadelphia for this specific purpose; a mass meeting to bring pressure on the trustees. Would some energetic readers in Philadelphia start the ball rolling? The *Weekly* is ready to sponsor the meeting if local organizations are too timorous.

In that almost empty courtroom last Wednesday (who cares about another Professor on trial?), with Committee Counsel Frank S. Tavenner, Jr., on the witness stand, it was an experience to hear him read into the record the testimony of Professors who "cooperated" and again to live through the anguished moments our latter day inquisitors imposed on scholars and teachers, bartering safety for self-respect. Professor Dunham was one of that handful who came through the ordeal with honor in a period when few American intellectuals showed much in the way of guts.

As the Supreme Court opened last week there were further indications of a changing climate of judicial opinion. Though the Court in recent years has frowned on "friends of the

German Heroes Return

"Bonn, Oct. 17—Prof. Karl Glauberg, head of the so-called experimental medical center in the Auschwitz extermination camp, returned last Thursday from Soviet captivity in a convoy of 598 war prisoners. . . .

"Dr. Glauberg told reporters for the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* . . . that Himmler had assigned 400 Jewish women prisoners to him for experiments in sterilization. . . . Dr. Glauberg spoke of his experiments with a sense of scientific achievement and appeared to be inordinately proud of his work. . . .

"Foreign reporters who saw the first arrivals at Camp Friedland said privately on their return to Bonn they had the impression that the first convoy included a substantial number of men who had been in special units detailed for extermination work among civilians and prisoners of war."

—N. Y. Times, Oct. 8, Late City Edition only.

Odd that reporters should take to reporting "privately." Why the protective curtain around these "heroes"?

court" briefs, it agreed to receive that offered by 360 citizens in the pending case which may decide the fate of the McCarran Act.

The Court also agreed, for the first time since the original *Dennis* case, to hear a Smith Act appeal. The 14 convicted California Communists are to have a hearing denied the "second string" New York and Baltimore defendants.

Freedom of the Press Angle

The California cases have one unusual feature. Augustin Donovan, a leading member of the State Bar and of the Knights of Columbus, will argue as attorney without compensation for two of the defendants, Al Richmond and Philip M. Connelly. Both are editors of the *Daily People's World*. When John Gates, editor of the *Daily Worker*, was convicted in the first Smith Act case, it could be argued that he was convicted not as a Communist editor but as a member of the party's Central Committee.

But the activities of Richmond and Connelly for years have been those of newspapermen. Sixty-eight issues of their paper were put in evidence. Donovan in his petition for a hearing said "not a single word" advocating overthrow was turned up by the government. His argument will be that if unlawful activities may be inferred from writings in themselves legitimate, then freedom of the press is endangered.

Let Us Send A Free Sample Copy of This Issue to A Labor Union Friend

I. F. Stone's Weekly, 301 E. Capitol, Wash. 3, D. C.
Please renew (or enter) my sub for the enclosed \$5:*

Name

Street

City Zone..... State.....

Enter gift sub for \$2 (6 mos.) or \$4 (1 yr.) additional:

(To) Name

Street

City Zone..... State.....

* \$1 extra for Canada.

10/24/55

I. F. Stone's Weekly

Room 205

301 E. Capitol St., S. E.

Washington 3, D. C.

NEWSPAPER

Entered as
Second Class Mail
Matter
Washington, D. C.
Post Office